

Revive Your Resolutions

Your motivation to stick to your New Year's goals may have fizzled, but you still have six months to make them happen. Here's how.

By Leslie Goldman

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Come out strong in the second half.

➔ The iconic Times Square globe wasn't the only ball to get dropped in early 2011. Of the 120 million Americans who rang in the New Year with a resolution, 36 percent ditched their vows by February. Chilly temps, dreary days, and a wardrobe full of parkas and sweats can make a Snuggie seem more alluring than a spin class.

But it's possible to rebound. Researchers found that 71 percent of people who eventually met their goals said an initial slipup made them all the more determined to get back on track.

And thanks to this season's mild weather and long daylight hours, it's the perfect time to renew your slim-down vows. Now, for that kick in the pants...



WALTER CHIN/TRUNK ARCHIVE

Resolution: Hit the gym every day.

The problem: Aiming to do anything every day, besides eat and breathe, is setting yourself up for failure.

The fix: Commit to a more realistic schedule of four days a week, says Bonnie Pfiester, co-owner of BCx Boot Camp in Vero Beach, Florida. That gives you three days of wiggle room (for late work nights or Saturday-morning hangovers), but you have to consider the four workout days nonnegotiable. “You likely failed the first time around because you saw workouts as optional,” says Pfiester. “If you schedule them like business meetings or lunch dates, you’ll be more likely to follow through.” Create a specific action plan (e.g., Monday, 7 p.m.: spin class; Wednesday, 6 a.m.: circuit workout plus 20 minutes of cardio intervals; Thursday, 6 p.m.: 30-minute power walk before dinner; Friday, 7 a.m.: vinyasa yoga class). Then put it on your calendar.

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PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO SAID THAT LOSING WEIGHT WAS THEIR TOP RESOLUTION

Source: *Journal of Clinical Psychology*

Resolution: Weight train more often.

The problem: You can’t tear your cardio-obsessed butt off the elliptical.

The fix: Think 30 minutes of lunges and pushups can’t match an hour on the stair-climber? Think again. Circuit strength training (doing exercises without resting in between) challenges your muscles more than a lollygagging cardio workout, says Jen Cohen, official trainer for CW’s *Shedding for the Wedding*. Plus, there’s a bonus after-burn effect: A 2010 study found that people who did a strength-training circuit blazed an extra 100 calories per day for the next three days. The best part? The quick bursts of effort keep your heart rate up, giving you that cardio buzz you crave. Most gyms offer classes with this philosophy, but you can also find at-home versions at WomensHealthMag.com.

Resolution: Work out in the a.m.

The problem: You hit the snooze button the way the Real Housewives hit the chardonnay—hard and often.

The fix: Morning workouts aren’t for everyone—and they don’t need to be.

In fact, late afternoon is when muscle strength and alertness peak, so it’s a great time to power through a routine. But if sunrise is the only time you can fit in exercise, buddy up. “Knowing someone will be knocking at your door or meeting you at the gym helps you fight the temptation to sleep in,” says Pfiester. And as your jeans start sliding on more easily, you’ll be more driven to stick to the schedule—with or without a pal. No one willing to tag along with you at the crack of dawn? Hire a trainer, join a boot-camp class, or log on to an online community. They all utilize the accountability concept—plus shelling out cash provides a financial incentive to show up.

Resolution: Drop 10 to 20 pounds.

The problem: You lost a few fast, then stalled and slipped back into old habits.

The fix: Expecting to lose weight without a plan of action isn’t a New Year’s resolution, it’s a fantasy, says John Norcross, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania. It’s critical not only to say what you want to do but also to figure out how you’ll achieve it. Instead of vowing to shed a large amount of weight and then winging it, decide to lose a pound a week by, say, packing your lunch and going to the gym four days a week. Monitoring new behavior is empowering, says Norcross, so break it down by charting your weekly exercise minutes or daily veggie servings.

Resolution: Run a marathon.

The problem: The distance intimidated you, or the training burned you out.

The fix: Go slow. The distance (26.2 miles) is daunting for anyone, especially a newbie. And if that didn’t deter you, a too-eager training plan may have.

New to the racing scene? Consider all of your options. “It doesn’t have to be marathon or bust,” says Jake Havenar, Ph.D., a running coach in Mountain View, California. First try a 5-K, then build up to a 10-K or half marathon. “Gradually increasing your distance boosts your chance of success, which builds self-confidence.” And people with confidence are more likely to reach their goals, says Norcross.

If you still have the marathon itch, consider this: More than 140 U.S. marathons will take place this fall, and because most training schedules are 16 weeks long, June (not January!) is an ideal time to get started. ■